



April 10, 2018

Senator Bob Corker  
Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Bob Menendez  
Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations  
Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: April 12 confirmation hearing for Secretary of State Nominee Michael Pompeo**

Dear Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA (“AIUSA”) and our more than one million members nationwide, we hereby submit this statement for the hearing record. The President’s nominee, Michael Pompeo, to be the next Secretary of State has raised concern, at home and abroad, about the administration’s commitment, or lack thereof, to human rights. This Committee is taking up the Pompeo nomination at a time when the world is facing a growing threat of thermonuclear war, an unprecedented [65.6 million](#) people around the world have fled their homes in search of humanitarian protection, and journalists and human rights defenders are being jailed and killed by oppressive governments. AIUSA urges this Committee to thoroughly probe Pompeo’s human rights record.

Although the Senate confirmed Pompeo as CIA Director, this Committee must not rubber-stamp his nomination as Secretary of State. **This Committee must conduct a vigorous probe anew, as the two cabinet posts are dramatically different and therefore require different qualifications and present different considerations for the Senate.** The CIA Director’s mission is to collect intelligence and data to assist the national security of the country. The Secretary of State is the nation’s top diplomat and the face of human rights abroad. In



representing the U.S. to the world, the Secretary of State must be a respected leader who evinces the nation's longstanding leadership on international human rights laws and standards.

The Secretary's duties include conducting high-level human rights dialogues with other governments, raising human rights issues and cases through diplomatic and public channels, and coordinating human rights policy. Prior Secretaries of State have used diplomatic and other channels to press governments to release political prisoners, to investigate crimes against humanity, and to bring human rights violators to justice. Pompeo's prior statements supporting torture and indefinite detention, and his record of hostility towards refugees, Muslims, women, and LGBTI individuals reveal a nominee who has flagrantly disregarded human rights, civil rights, and international law.

**Espouses torture:** The prohibition on torture is a central tenet of the modern international human rights legal framework. As a party to the Convention Against Torture, the U.S. is obligated to "take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction." Pompeo, however, has voiced support for the use of interrogation methods that amount to torture. As congressperson, Pompeo espoused torture, [stating](#) that those who perpetrated the crimes outlined in the 2014 Senate "torture report" were "not torturers, they [were] patriots." The State Department plays a key role in ensuring that individuals in U.S. custody are not sent to places where they face a risk of torture. Pompeo's prior support for torture and his expressed frustration with laws banning torture raise concerns that he could support the use of secret unlawful renditions or proxy detentions, in violation of international law.



**Supports indefinite detention:** Pompeo opposes closing the Guantanamo Bay prison and instead supports [indefinite detention](#) without charge or trial. His staunch support of the prison is very troubling in light of the President’s plans to expand it, over the recommendations of a broad range of national security experts across the political spectrum.

**Hostility towards Muslims:** After the 2013 Boston Marathon attacks, then-Congressperson Pompeo [falsely accused](#) Muslim-American leaders of failing to condemn the attacks, equating their silence with complicity in terrorism. During events he hosted in his home state of Kansas, Pompeo [voiced](#) that the [threat to the United States](#) is from “people who deeply believe that Islam is the way.”

As Secretary of State, Pompeo would be the nation’s chief diplomat to the entire world including Muslim-majority countries. He would also oversee the State Department’s designation of entities as individuals and organizations as so-called foreign terrorist organizations. Given his record of hostility against Muslims, it remains very much in question whether Pompeo could effectively represent and advance the U.S. human rights agenda.

In addition, as the head of the State Department, the Secretary of State oversees most of the U.S. government’s human rights work including as pertains to of the [Bureau of Democracy, Labor, and Human Rights](#) (“DRL”), the [Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration](#) (“PRM”), [Office of Global Criminal Justice](#) (“GCJ”), and the [Office of Global Women’s Issues](#) (“GWI”). These offices lead and coordinate the U.S. government’s work on human rights reporting, refugee resettlement, war crimes investigations, and fighting gender-based violence. Whether Pompeo would effectively advance—or undermine—the human rights aspects of these programs is an open question.



**Supports refugee ban:** As congressperson, Pompeo [co-sponsored](#) legislation to ban all refugee admissions, regardless of country, even though refugees were already subject to a multi-years-long vetting process. His espousal of an outright refugee ban is highly problematic given that PRM is tasked with protecting and resettling refugees who have fled persecution and dangerous conditions. PRM works with the United Nations refugee agency and other governments to screen, vet, resettle, and welcome refugees, in accordance with best practices in humanitarian principles.

**Opposes reproductive rights:** As a congressperson, Pompeo cast dozens of votes against women's health. He [co-sponsored](#) legislation to make abortion illegal nationwide in nearly all cases, and [voted](#) to defund Planned Parenthood even though Planned Parenthood provides critical health services, other than abortion, to low-income women and women of color. He also supports the [Global Gag Rule](#), a deadly policy that bars overseas health clinics from receiving U.S. aid if they use their own money to so much as educate their communities on where to access safe abortion. Pompeo's staunch opposition to reproductive rights is especially dangerous given that the Secretary of State oversees GWI and DRL, both key offices charged with reporting and advancing human rights including women's rights.

**Hostility to LGBTI communities:** Pompeo [opposed](#) the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell ("DADT"), and even after the DADT repeal, [continued to call](#) for the exclusion of LGBTI people from military service. As congressperson, Pompeo [co-sponsored](#) legislation opposed to marriage equality, and [characterized](#) the 2015 Supreme Court ruling on marriage equality as a "shocking abuse of power." More recently, as CIA Director, Pompeo [cancelled](#) a planned speech about diversity and LGBTI rights. His anti-LGBTI rights record is extremely troubling



given the rise in anti-LGBTI violence in Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Egypt, and other countries. It is essential that the Secretary of State be recognized as a serious leader who is willing and able to press world leaders to halt anti-LGBTI violence.

At a time when human rights are under assault across the globe, it is essential that the Secretary of State commit to fighting for human rights through all diplomatic channels, investigative tools, and rigorous documentation. AIUSA urges this Committee to press Pompeo to commit publicly on the record to uphold the State Department's long-established record of protecting and resettling refugees, investigating war crimes and genocide, fighting gender-based violence, and documenting human rights abuses across the world. It is critical that the Senate use its constitutionally granted power, as a co-equal branch in foreign policy, to lay a clear marker on human rights protection and demand that the next Secretary of State live up to international law and standards.

For more information, please contact me at [jlin@aiusa.org](mailto:jlin@aiusa.org) or 202/509-8151.

Sincerely,

Joanne Lin  
National Director  
Advocacy and Government Affairs